1: Mair E-5 (1931-1932)1934
FK7 Ganda FK7

started a native teaching sisterhood. But this does not account for all the educated girls, small as is their number relatively to the total, and various schemes have been set on foot to train them for other occupations. Lady Cook, who, as Mrs. Katharine Cook, inaugurated the training of native midwives, has now started a domestic science course at her own house, where some dozen girls are learning European cooking and housework. Another plan which, if it succeeds, should bring more direct benefit to the girls themselves is to give a training in infant welfare which will first qualify them for employment as nurses to European children—women are already so employed, but these are usually older women, and are said to be very unsatisfactory—and will later enable them to bring up their own children on more hygienic lines. In so far as this training concentrates on improvements which would be practicable in a native home it should be very valuable; but the scheme is not yet in operation and, in any case, will for some years to come be confined to a single school with a very small number of pupils.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
FF52 Nupe FF52

that the all-too-broad unity of Islam is (as I put it before) narrowed down to the scope of a national church.

The *navū* is to some extent a smaller replica of the *salla*, including, again, the state procession to the mosque, with all its display of royal splendour and evoking the same festive mood of a large city bent on enjoyment. But the royal display occupies only a brief phase, on the morning of New Year's Day; and the enjoyment has a new emphasis, on youth, and on moral licence.

On the eve of New Year, at nightfall, the young people of Bida, both youths and girls, forgather at the three streams that cross the town. The girls come in little groups, while the boys and young men are formed into companies, each composed of an age-grade association under its leader. They sing and dance on the way, and the youths all carry torches, which they swing or throw high up in the air, and sometimes brandish at one another in playful attacks. Arrived at the river the youths remove their gowns and the girls their upper garments, and thus stripped to the waist wade into the water. They splash about, with much shrieking and laughing, try dance steps, jumps and somersaults, and the boys engage in brief wrestling bouts, invariably terminated by a ducking. Now and again this clowning gives way to a mock battle, when the boys will thrust and throw the torches at one another, age-group fighting age-group, not seriously, but keenly and with marked excitement. It needs skill to catch the wildly flying firebrands or to parry those aimed at you. Nor are narrow escapes uncommon, and first-aid treatments for burns are a regular aftermath of the *navū*. The excitement of the fight, moreover, is matched by the openly erotic excitement provoked by the occasion. This is indeed unique; at no other time will Nupe girls disrobe in the presence of men or show themselves with bare breasts. The girls will keep to the dark side of the river; but the youths throw torches in their direction to surprise a girl while she is undressing or bathing. There is cruder horseplay, too, the boys trying to seize the girls or to bump into them as though unwittingly; while in the shadows and under the bridge couples pursue their amorous play unseen. But though there is plenty of teasing and joking, the language is never obscene. About midnight the bathing breaks up and the young people return to their homes.

This prelude to the *navū* was not always so tame. Until fairly recently the mock battle of torches was meant quite seriously.[1] The three different bathing places are chosen in accordance with the threefold dynastic division of the city, and are visited by the age-grade associations in the respective local division. The diverse

[1] The word 'battle' has been chosen advisedly. All informants describing the usage emphasized that it was 'like a war'.

2: Nadel E-5 (1934-1936) 1954
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loyalties which govern the town hold their sway over youth as well as adults; and on the occasion of the *navũ* the factional jealousies, never fully submerged, were allowed to come into the open. Thus the torch processions invariably led to organized and heated fights between the three groups; on the way back from the river, especially, one would ambush the other or try to invade the rival territory. The battle is said to have lasted the whole night, being fought with torches, sticks, stones, and any handy weapons. Injuries (some say, even death) inflicted in the course of the *navũ* went unpunished; for on this one night the law of the land was suspended. Eventually, in 1920 or thereabouts, the excesses of this all-too realistic play forced the Government to intervene and to forbid this phase of the *navũ*.

In spite of its realism, however, the mock battle not only legitimized factional hostility but also diverted it into relatively harmless channels. For though the boys and youths would give vent to sentiments commonly felt, they themselves were still outside serious politics and not yet genuinely caught up in factional strife. They would still be play-acting, however realistically, much as their whole age-grade life, with its imitation of adult ranks and ambitions, is play-acting and a make-believe copy of 'real life'. For the population of the city, whose sons and brothers took part in the 'battle of youth', this was in the nature of a vicarious and controlled catharsis of tensions grown over the year; for the young fighters, it was the climax of age-grade life and a seal set to this 'education for citizenship'. Needless to say, the practice is still vividly remembered. And it is not only the older people who talk nostalgically about their more exciting youth; the young people today have preserved at least the idea of the thing. Small boys with whom I talked before the *navũ* explained to me with great glee all that they and their age mates were going to do to their 'enemies'. In the end, of course, they did nothing; so that today the 'battle of youth' has moved a further stage towards mere make-believe.[1]

The licensed aggression of the torch festival reappears on the next day in a new context, that of kinship. For the *navũ* is also an occasion for *ma dzo*, for 'joking', that is, for the licensed liberties commonly referred to as 'joking relationship'. Though much less formalized than in other African societies, the institution of joking relationship plays a clearly defined part in Nupe social life. The individuals standing in this relationship are called *dzomanci*, 'playmates', the relationship itself being derived mainly from kinship position. Thus the joking relationship obtains between grandparents and grandchildren of the opposite sex; between cross

[1] See also *A Black Byzantium*, pp. 396–7.